



**DHEC's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling**

**For Your Information...**

## Illegal Dumping

Illegal dumping is the improper disposal of waste at any location other than a permitted landfill or facility. It is not only against the law, but illegal dumping also poses a threat to human health and the environment.

Also known as open dumping or midnight dumping, illegal dumping usually happens in open areas, along roadsides, in wooded areas and even in state parks, and frequently occurs late at night. The waste primarily is non-hazardous material that is dumped to avoid disposal fees or the time and effort required for proper disposal.

### **Illegal dumping is a serious issue.**

The state can prosecute illegal dumpers through the S.C. Litter Control Act and the S.C. Solid Waste Policy and Management Act of 1991. The S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) has criminal investigators assigned to investigate open dumping. Anyone convicted of illegal dumping may be fined, ordered to clean up the site and given a jail sentence.

The cost of cleaning up illegal dumping is ultimately placed on the person who was proven to have done it or the property owner.

### **What types of materials are dumped?**

The materials typically dumped include:

- construction and demolition (C&D) debris including drywall, shingles, lumber, bricks, concrete and siding;
- large appliances;
- abandoned vehicles, parts and tires;
- furniture;
- yard trimmings;
- household garbage; and
- medical waste.

Tires, large appliances and yard trimmings often are illegally dumped because they are banned from

municipal solid waste landfills in South Carolina and proper disposal takes more time and costs money. Household garbage and commercial waste also are illegally dumped because there isn't adequate service or simply to avoid disposal costs.

If not addressed, illegal dumps often attract more waste including hazardous waste such as household chemicals, paint, asbestos and automobile fluids.

### **Where are the materials dumped?**

The common locations used for illegal dumping often include abandoned industrial sites, vacant lots on public or private property and little used roadways or alleyways. Areas along rural roads and railways are particularly vulnerable because of their accessibility and poor lighting.

Here is an important note to property owners – it is illegal to allow open dumping on your property. Often, property owners try to benefit financially by charging a fee to someone who in turn dumps waste on the property. This is illegal.

Sometimes a property owner may take land-clearing debris to fill ravines or other low areas on the property without obtaining proper permits. Again, this is illegal.

### **Who dumps this stuff?**

It is difficult to single out a "typical" dumper. But offenders can be:

- construction, demolition, remodeling, roofing and landscaping contractors;
- automobile repair or tire shop owners or employees;
- general hauling contractors;
- scrap collectors;
- do-it-yourselfers; and
- local residents.

C&D debris is a particular problem and makes up a large percentage of illegal dumps. Some builders and contractors cut their costs by illegally dumping, thus under-bidding those who legally dispose of their materials at permitted C&D debris landfills. C&D debris landfills are set up to accept waste from construction, remodeling, repair and demolition of structures, road building and land-clearing activities.

## Why is illegal dumping a problem?

The human health risks associated with illegal dumps are significant. Illegal dumps may be easily accessible to people, particularly children, who can be at risk to chemicals (fluids or dust) or get hurt from nails and sharp edges of materials.

Illegal dumps also attract all kinds of rodents and insects. For example, illegal dumps with waste tires provide a practically perfect place for mosquitoes to breed. Mosquitoes can multiply 100 times faster than normal in the warm, stagnant water in waste tires. Severe illnesses like encephalitis have been attributed to disease-carrying mosquitoes coming from waste tires.

In addition, property has been damaged because of illegal dumps that have caught fire, frequently by arson. Illegal dumping can impact proper drainage making areas more susceptible to flooding when waste blocks creeks, culverts and drainage basins.

In rural areas, open burning – which also is illegal – and open dumps can cause forest fires and severe erosion as fire destroys trees and undergrowth. Runoff from illegal dumps may contaminate wells and surface water used as sources of drinking water. And as a result of illegal dumping, property values may decrease.

## What can I do?

- If you see illegal dumping or an open dump, call DHEC's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling (Office) at **1-800-768-7348**. The Office will forward your complaint to the proper DHEC staff person.
- If you are having a house built or remodeled, make sure the waste from your site is being properly disposed of – ask your contractor for the details.
- Recycle.
- Grasscycle.
- Compost your yard trimmings.
- Properly dispose of the remainder of your solid waste.

For more information on this and other solid waste issues, please call the Office at **1-800-768-7348** or visit [www.scdhec.gov/recycle](http://www.scdhec.gov/recycle).



Office of Solid Waste  
Reduction & Recycling  
**1-800-768-7348 ● [www.scdhec.gov/recycle](http://www.scdhec.gov/recycle)**

DHEC's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling FYIs provide general information on environmental topics. Readers are encouraged to reproduce this material. For more information about solid waste issues, please call **1-800-768-7348** or visit our Web site at [www.scdhec.gov/recycle](http://www.scdhec.gov/recycle). Please send written correspondence to: DHEC's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling, 2600 Bull Street, Columbia, SC 29201.